

Inca mythology

Inca mythology includes many stories and legends that attempt to explain or symbolize Inca beliefs.^[1]

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Chakana amulet carved from a local soft stone (Jujuy, Argentina).

Basic beliefs

Scholarly research demonstrates that Incan belief systems were integrated with their view of the cosmos, especially in regard to the way that the Inca observed the motions of the Milky Way and the solar system as seen from Cusco, the Inca capital whose name meant the center of the earth. From this perspective, their stories depict the movements of constellations, planets, and planetary formations, which are all connected to their agricultural cycles. This was especially important for the Inca, as they relied on cyclical agricultural seasons, which were not only connected to annual cycles, but to a much wider cycle of time (every 800 years at a time). This way of keeping time was deployed in order to ensure the cultural transmission of key information, in spite of regime change or social catastrophes.

After the Spanish conquest of Peru by Francisco Pizarro, colonial officials burned the records kept by the Inca. There is currently a theory put forward by Gary Urton that the Quipus could have been a binary system capable of recording phonological or logographic data. Still, to date, all that is known is based on what was recorded by priests, from the iconography on Inca pottery and architecture, and from the myths and legends that have survived among the native peoples of the Andes.

Inca foundation legends

Manco Cápac was the legendary founder of the Inca Dynasty in Peru and the Cusco Dynasty at Cusco. The legends and history surrounding him are very contradictory, especially those concerning his rule at Cuzco and his origins. In one legend, he was the son of Viracocha. In another, he was brought up from the depths of Lake Titicaca by the sun god Inti. However, commoners were not allowed to speak the name of Viracocha, which is possibly an explanation for the need for three foundation legends rather than just one.^[2]

There were also many myths about Manco Cápac and his coming to power. In one myth, Manco Cápac and his brother Pacha Kamaq were sons of the sun god Inti. Manco Cápac was worshiped as the fire and sun god. In another myth, Manco Cápac was sent with Mama Ocllo (others even mention numerous siblings) to Lake Titicaca where they resurfaced and settled on the Isla Del Sol. According to this legend, Manco Cápac and his siblings were sent up to the earth by the sun god and emerged from the cave of Puma Orco at Paqariq Tampu carrying a golden staff called 'tapac-yauri'. They were instructed to create a Temple of the Sun in the spot where the staff sank into the earth to honor the sun god Inti, their father. During the journey, one of Manco's brothers (Ayar Cachi) was tricked into returning to Puma Urqu and sealed inside or alternatively was turned to ice, because his reckless and cruel behavior angered the tribes that they were attempting to rule. (*huaca*).

Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa wrote that there was a hill referred to as Tambotoco, about 33 kilometers from Cuzco, where eight men and women emerged as the original Inca's. The men were Manco Capac, Ayar Auca, Ayar Cachi and Ayar Uchu. The women were Mama Ocllo, Mama Huaco, Mama Ipacura, and Mama Raua.^[3]

In another version of this legend, instead of emerging from a cave in Cuzco, the siblings emerged from the waters of Lake Titicaca. Since this was a later origin myth than that of Pacaritambo it may have been created as a ploy to bring the powerful Aymara tribes into the fold of the Tawantinsuyo.

In the Inca Virachocha legend, Manco Cápac was the son of Inca Viracocha of Paqariq Tampu which is 25 km (16 mi) south of Cuzco. He and his brothers (Ayar Auca, Ayar Cachi, and Ayar Uchu); and sisters (Mama Ocllo, Mama Huaco, Mama Raua, and Mama Cura) lived near Cusco at Paqariq Tampu, and uniting their people and the ten ayllu they encountered in their travels to conquer the tribes of the Cusco Valley. This legend also incorporates the golden staff, which is thought to have been given to Manco Cápac by his father. Accounts vary, but according to some versions of the legend, the young Manco jealously betrayed his older brothers, killed them, and then became Cusco. Copacati is the lake Goddess whose worship was centered on Tiahuanaco, The Copacati is a Venom spitter, which is different from the Longwing acid.

Deities

Like the Romans, the Incas permitted the cultures they integrated into their empire to keep their individual religions. Below are some of the various gods worshiped by the peoples of the Incan empire, many of which have overlapping responsibilities and domains. Unless otherwise noted, it can safely be assumed these were worshipped by different ayllus or worshipped in particular former states.^[4]

- Apu was a god or spirit of mountains. All of the important mountains have their own Apu, and some of them receive sacrifices to bring out certain aspects of their being. Some rocks and caves also are credited as having their own apu.^[5]

- Amaru is a serpent or dragon deity often represented as a winged serpent, with crystalline eyes, a reddish snout, a llama head, taruka horns, and a fish tail, depending on the variations of the Amaru, whether in the various animal features or tonality of its skin according to the legend told, the ophidic form of the Amaru was always present. In the Inca mythology it was a symbol of wisdom, which is why the image of said totemic being was placed in the children of the Houses of Knowledge (Yachay Wasikuna). Amaru is associated with the economy of water, that irrigate the agricultural lands, symbolizing the vitality of the water that allows the existence of the Aymara people. Thus the deity Amaru symbolizes the water that runs through the irrigation canals, rivers and springs and that makes it possible for the seeds of the crop to be transformed into vegetables. Amaru is a mythical being that is also related to the underworld, the earth and earthquakes. Despite the fact of Amaru dragons being benevolent deities, some Amarus have violent behaviour against humans, there's a myth called "Amaru Aranway" that is about two Amarus fighting against each other, causing destruction and death as the fight still goes on, then Viracocha send the god Illapa (Thunder) and Wayrapuka (Wind) to defeat them, the two Amarus tried to fight the gods but then they tried to escape flying to the skies, but Wayrapuka drag them back to earth with the power of wind and Illapa fought and put the final blow to them, when the two Amarus died, they turned into the chain of mountains that are located in valle del Mantaro, Peru.
- Ataguchu was a god who assisted in creation myth.
- Axomamma was a goddess of potatoes.
- Catequil was the god of thunder and lightning in the northern part of Peru, he's also the god of day and good. Catequil and his twin brother Piguerao were born from hatched eggs.
- Cavillace was a virgin goddess who ate a fruit, which was actually the sperm of Coniraya, the moon god. When she gave birth to a son, she demanded that the father step forward. No one did, so she put the baby on the ground and it crawled towards Coniraya. She was ashamed because of Coniraya's low stature among the gods, and ran to the coast of Peru, where she changed herself and her son into rocks.
- Ch'aska ("Venus") or Ch'aska Quyllur ("Venus star") was the goddess of dawn, the twilight and dusk.
- Chuychu is the beautiful rainbow that was below both great gods (Punchaw and Ch'aska) and that was later elevated to the god of the nobles because it represented the beauty that was reserved for the nobles.
- Coniraya was the moon deity who fashioned his sperm into a fruit, which Cavillaca then ate.
- Copacati was a lake goddess.
- Ekeko was a god of the hearth and wealth. The ancients made dolls that represented him and placed a miniature version of their desires onto the doll; this was believed to caused the user to receive what he desired.
- Huallallo Carhuincho is the god of fire and the main god of the wankas, depicted as a human with dog traits, with an evil profile and a devourer of children. Exiled to the jungles by Viracocha, he lives in solitude eating animals, although he also feeds on human flesh. One day, he meets a boy and plans to eat him. Then the boy revealing himself as Inti, the Sun god, is punished again by Viracocha and sent to an island, tied hand and foot, at the mercy of birds and other animals that will bite him for eternity.
- Huari was the giant god of war originally belonging to the homonymous culture, the Incas would later include him in their pantheon. It is believed that he had the main center of it in the alley of Conchucos, the same place where Chavín de Huántar was erected.



Supay, god of death, as interpreted in a carnival festival

- *Hurkaway* was a guardian snake that lurks around in Uku Pacha, it's believed that this creature is actually Urcaguary, the god of metals and treasures.
- *Illapa* ("Thunder and lightning"; a.k.a. *Apu Illapa*, Ilyap'a, Katoylla, Intillapa, Libiac) was the god of thunder, lightning and rain, as well as Illapa was the god of war. He is represented as an imposing man with brilliant gold garments and precious stones, Illapa carried a huaraca with which he produced storms and a gold makana which symbolizes the trinity of thunder, lightning and lightning bolts, another representation that Illapa takes in the Kay Pacha or human world it is that of a large feline, puma or jaguar. This God was considered the third most important divinity within the Inca pantheon, after Viracocha and Inti, due to this, Illapa was highly revered, especially in times of pilgrimage and drought. Illapa had a place of worship in Coricancha as well as the god Inti, the church of San Blas in Cuzco was built on a temple in which this god was worshiped, in the fortress of Sacsayhuaman built by Pachacútec, it forms the head of the puma, an animal that represents Illapa and has the shape of the city of Cuzco, it is believed that Sacsayhuaman was used as a ceremonial temple and military fortress, in some parts of the fortress there are details of architecture in the form of lightning, alluding to the fact that they worshiped the god of thunder Illapa and since Sacsayhuaman was a military fortress, it alludes to Illapa as the god of war within the Inca pantheon.
- *Inti* was the sun god. Source of warmth and light and a protector of the people. Inti was considered the most important god. The Inca Emperors were believed to be the lineal descendants of the sun god.
- *Kon* was the god of rain and wind that came from the south. He was a son of Inti and Mama Killa. This god was light weight, since he lacked bones and meat, despite this, he had a human form, he was also represented as a being with a feline face, although it is believed that he wore feline masks, due to these characteristics, this god is known as "the flying feline", he carried trophy heads and a staff, due to his prominent eyes, he is also known as "the eyed god". Kon created the first generation of humans, until his defeat and exile by Pachakamaq.
- *Mallku* ("Spirits of the mountains"), is a deity that represents the spirit and strength of the mountains. It takes the form of a powerful Condor.
- *Mama Allpa* was a fertility goddess depicted with multiple breasts.
- *Mama Koka* ("Mother of coca leaves") was the goddess of health and happiness in Inca mythology. She was originally a promiscuous woman who was torn in half by several jealous lovers. After her death, one of her parts would originate the coca plant, widely consumed by the Andean people, according to their mentality, these plants gave health and happiness.
- *Mama Nina* ("Mother of fire") was the goddess of light, the fire and volcanoes.
- *Mama Qucha* ("Sea mother") also called Mama Cocha, was the sea and fish goddess, protectress of sailors and fishermen. In one legend she mothered Inti and Mama Killa with Wiraguacha. Mama Qucha is considered one of the four elemental mothers, including Mama Nina (Mother of Fire), Pachamama (Mother Earth) and Mama Wayra (Mother of the Winds). Having as a curious fact that she, together with Pachamama and Mama Killa, form the three phases of the Moon.
- *Mama Pacha* (a.k.a. *Pachamama*) literally translates to "mother nature" and was considered a sacred being by the andean cosmovision, the mother of the hills and men since she not only cares for the material but also for the spiritual, protector of nature, provider of water and food, favoring the fertility of the earth and sheltering human beings in exchange for help and protection, the Incas promoted the greatest veneration towards her and therefore her cult was important, because the success of the empire's harvests depended on it. Although it is considered a kind spirit and collaborator of human activities, it can also be hostile to those who do not respect nature; their rancor is shown through droughts, earthquakes, or making the weather unsuitable for growing food. She was the wife of Pachakamaq, who was considered the god of the sky and the clouds, although in other legends, Pachakamaq was

the god of fire or earthquakes, the union of the Pachamama with Pachakamaq would come to represent the union of the earth and sky. Her artistic representation shows her as an adult woman who carries the harvest of potatoes and coca leaves, another representation of this goddess is that of a dragon, she is also symbolized with a spiral.

- **Mama Killa** ("Mother moon" or "golden mother") was a marriage, festival and moon goddess and daughter of **Wiraqucha** and **Mama Qucha**, as well as wife and sister of **Inti**. She was the mother of **Manqu Qhapaq**, **Pacha Kamaq**, **Kon** and **Mama Uqllu**.
 - **Mama Sara** ("Maize mother", a.k.a. **Saramama**) was the goddess of grain. She was associated with maize that grew in multiples or were similarly strange. These strange plants were sometimes dressed as dolls of **Mama Sara**. She was also associated with willow trees. She had several subjects:
 - **Kuka Manka** ("Coca cup constellations") was a constellation that took care of magical herbs.
 - **Sara Manka** ("Corn cup constellation") a constellation that took care of plant foods.
 - **Mama Wayra** ("Mother of wind") was the goddess of air and winds, protector of the birds. She was considered as a purifying goddess.
 - **Pacha Kamaq** ("Earth-maker") was a chthonic creator god, earlier worshiped by the **Ichma** but later adopted into the creation myth of the Inca. The ancient Peruvians thought that a single movement of his head would cause earthquakes, since **Pachakamaq** was a god associated with being able to predict the future and control the movements of the earth, due to this, **Pachakamaq** is also known as the "god of the earthquakes". He is known as the creator god of the second generation of humans, after a fierce and long battle between **Pachakamaq** and the god **Kon**, a battle in which **Kon** would end up being defeated and banished by the victorious **Pachakamaq**. **Pachakamaq** was highly respected, because no one could not look him directly eye to eye and even his priests entered backwards to see him. Due to his powerful influence, the Incas adopted him into the pantheon as part of the Inca creation myth. Only high dignitaries entered the great temples, but ordinary pilgrims could observe and make their own sacrifices in the plazas.
 - **Paryaqaqa** which name translates as "**Stone falcon**". **Paryaqaqa** was the god of **water** in pre-inca mythology, coming from the **Huanca culture** to be more precise, a god that was later adopted by the Incas into his pantheon. He was a storm god and considered as a creator god. He was born as a falcon like his five brothers in **Condorcoto** mountain, to later become a **Kolash** (human from the nest).
 - **Paricia** was a god who sent a flood to kill humans who did not respect him adequately. Possibly another name for **Pacha Kamaq** or **Paryaqaqa**.
 - **Piguerao** also called **Pikiru**, was the god of night and evil.
 - **Qhaxra-kamayuq** were guardian spirits who made an effort to prevent thieves from entering houses.
 - **Quyllur** was the goddess of the stars.
 - **Rímac** and **Chaclla** were two brother gods who sacrificed themselves to end a drought that plagued the coast in ancient times. **Rímac** became a river and **Chaclla** became the rain.
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- Representation of the cosmology of the Incas, according to **Juan de Santa Cruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamayhua** (1613), after a picture in the Sun Temple **Qurikancha** in **Cusco**, with **Inti** (the Sun), **Killa** (the Moon), **Illapa** (the Thunder), **Pachamama** (Mother Earth), **Mama Qucha** (Mother Sea), and **Chakana** (Southern Cross) with **Saramama** (Mother Corn) and **Kukamama** (Mother Coca).



Representation of the cosmology of the Incas, according to Juan de Santa Cruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamayhua (1613), after a picture in the Sun Temple Qurikancha in Cusco, with Inti (the Sun), Killa (the Moon), Illapa (the Thunder), Pachamama (Mother Earth), Mama Qucha (Mother Sea), and Chakana (Southern Cross) with Saramama (Mother Corn) and Kukamama (Mother Coca).

- *Sorimana* also called Solimana, was a pre-inca god of volcanoes and earthquakes. Solimana also shares the name of a volcano located in Arequipa, Peru.
- *Supay* was both the god of death and ruler of the Uku Pacha as well as a race of demons.
- *Tulumanya* also called Turumanyay, it was the first rainbow (rainbow of the ancients), from whose chest the Amaru is born by the influence of Viracocha.
- *Urcaguay* was the god of metals, jewels and other underground items of great value. Urcaguay was represented with a snake body and a taruka head, gold chains and precious stones were found linked in its snake tail, it is believed that the taruka or deer head is due to its way of thinking.
- *Urquchillay* was a deity that watched over animals.
- *Viracocha* was the god of everything. In the beginning he was the main god, but when Pachakuti became Inca emperor, he changed this god's importance, pointing out that the most important god was Inti.
- *Wasikamayuc* was the tutelary god of home.
- *Yanañamca* and *Tutañamca* are the twin gods of darkness and night. They ruled the world at the beginning of time, before the gods took care of the earth. Viracocha sends Huallallo Carhuincho, god of fire, to defeat them and, at the same time, illuminate the earth, although the latter stayed taking advantage of it and devouring his faithful ones.

Important beliefs

- Mama Uqllu was the sister and wife of Manqu Qhapaq. She was thought to have taught the Inca the art of spinning.
- Mamaconas were similar to nuns and lived in temple sanctuaries. They dedicated their lives to Inti, and served the Inca and priests. Young girls of the nobility or of exceptional beauty were trained for four years as acllas and then had the option of becoming mamaconas or marrying Inca nobles. They are comparable to the Roman Vestal Virgins, though Inca society did not value virginity as a virtue the way Western societies have done throughout history.
- In one legend, Unu Pachakuti was a great flood sent by Viracocha to destroy the giants that built Tiwanaku.
- A Wak'a was a sacred object such as a mountain or a mummy.

Important places

Inca cosmology was ordered in three spatio-temporal levels or Pachas.^[6] These included:

- Uku Pacha ("the lower world") was located within the earth's surface.
- Kay Pacha was the world in which we live.
- Hanan Pacha ("higher world") was the world above us where the sun and moon lived.^[7]

The environment and geography were integral part of Inca mythology as well. Many prominent natural features within the Inca Empire were tied to important myths and legends amongst the Inca.^[8] For example, Lake Titicaca, an important body of water on the Altiplano, was incorporated into Inca myths, as the lake of origins from which the world began.^[8] Similarly, many of prominent Andean peaks played special roles within the mythology of the Incas. This is reflected in myths about the Paxil mountain, from which people were alleged to have been created from corn kernels that were scattered by the gods.^[8] Terrestrial environments were not the only type of environment that was important to mythology. The Incas often incorporated the stars into legends and myths.^[9] For example, many constellations were given names and were incorporated into stories, such as the star formations of the Great Llama and the Fox.^[9] While perhaps

not relating to a single physical feature per se, environmental sound was extremely important in Incan mythology. For example, in the creation myth of Viracocha the sound of the god's voice is particularly important. Additionally, myths were transmitted orally, so the acoustics and sound of a location were important for Incan mythology.^[10] These examples demonstrate the power that environment held in creating and experiencing Incan myths.

Inca symbols

- Chakana (or Inca Cross, Chakana) is - according to some modern authors - the three-stepped cross equivalent symbolic of what is known in other mythologies as the Tree of Life, World Tree and so on. Through a central axis a shaman journeyed in trance to the lower plane or Underworld and the higher levels inhabited by the superior gods to enquire into the causes of misfortune on the Earth plane. The snake, puma, and condor are totemic representatives of the three levels. The alleged meaning of the *chakana* symbol is not supported by scholarly literature.



Chakana or tree of life

Deployments

Mythology served many purposes within the Incan Empire. Mythology could often be used to explain natural phenomena or to give the many denizens of the empire a way of thinking about the world. For example, there is a well-known origin myth that describes how the Incan Empire began at its center in Cusco. In this origin myth, four men and women emerged from a cave near Cusco, and began to settle within the Valley of Cusco, much to the chagrin of the Hualla people who had already been inhabiting the land.^[11] The Hualla subsided by growing coca and chili peppers, which the Incans associated with the peoples of the Amazon and who were perceived to be inferior and wild.^[11] The Inca engaged in battle with the Hualla, fighting quite viciously, and eventually the Inca emerged victorious. The myth alleges these first Inca people would plant corn, a mainstay of the Inca diet, on the location where they viciously defeated the Hualla.^[11] Thus, the myth continues, the Inca came to rule over the entire Cusco Valley, before eventually going on to conquer much of the Andean world.^[11]

In creating this myth, the Incans reinforced their authority over the empire. Firstly, by associating the Hualla with plants from the jungle, the Inca's origin myth would have likely caused the listener to think that the Hualla were primitive compared to the superior Inca. Thus, the Inca's defeat of the Hualla and their supposed development of maize based agriculture, supported the notion that the Inca were the rightful stewards of the land, as they were able to make the land productive and tame.^[11] These myths were reinforced in the many festivals and rites that were celebrated throughout the Incan Empire. For example, there were corn festivals that were celebrated annually during the harvest. During these festivals the Inca elite were celebrated alongside the corn and the main deity of the Inca, Inti.^[11] As such, the myth of original Inca's planting of the corn crop was utilized to associate the ruling Inca elite with the gods, as well as portraying them as being the bringers of the harvest. In this way, the origin myths of the Inca were used to justify the elite position of the Inca within their vast, multiethnic empire. Within the Inca Empire, the Inca held a special status of "Inca by Blood", that granted them significant privileges over non-Inca peoples.^[12] The ability of the Inca to support their elite position was no small feat, given that less than fifty thousand Inca were able to rule over millions of non-Inca peoples. Mythology was an important way by which the Inca were able to justify both the legitimacy of the Inca state, as well as their privileged position with the state.

The strategic deployment of Incan mythology did not end after the Incan empire was colonized by the Spanish. In fact, Incan mythology was utilized in order to resist and challenge the authority of the Spanish colonial authorities. Many Incan myths were utilized to criticize the wanton greed of European imperialism. There was widespread killing and rape of women and children in Peru by the European soldiers. For example, there are myths among the indigenous people of the former Inca empire that tell the stories of foreigners who come into the Andes and destroy valuable objects.^[13] One such myth is the tale of Atoqhuarco amongst the Quechua, which describes how an indigenous woman is destroyed in an act of rebellion against a lascivious foreigner who in turn is eventually transformed into a predatory fox.^[13] Powerful colonial institutions are also critiqued in some of these myths, with the Catholic Church being frequently lambasted. For example, the story of the Priest and Sexton highlights the hypocrisy and abusive nature of a Catholic Priest and his callous treatment of his indigenous parishioners.^[13] As such, these myths show that Inca mythology was strategically deployed to subvert and rebel against Spanish rule in the former Incan Empire.

Incan mythology continues to be a powerful force in contemporary Andean communities. After the nations that were once a part of the Incan Empire gained their independence from Spain, many of these nations struggled to find a suitable origin myth to support the legitimacy of their state.^[14] In the early twentieth century, there was a resurgence of interest about the indigenous heritage of these new nations. While these references to Inca mythology can be more overt, such as the presence of Inti on the Argentine flag, other references to the Inca mythology can be subtler.^[15] For example, in the late twentieth century the Peruvian Revolutionary government made reference to Inca myths about Pachamama, an Inca Mother Earth figure, in order to justify their land distribution programs.^[14] Additionally, modern governments continue to make reference to the former Inca Empire in order to support their claims of legitimacy, to the point that there are municipally funded observances of rituals referencing Inca mythology, especially in and around Cusco.^[14] The power of Incan mythology resonates in contemporary politics, with politicians like Alejandro Toledo making references to Inca mythology and imagery during their candidacies and tenures.^[16] While the Inca Empire may have ceased to exist hundreds of years ago, its vibrant mythology continues to influence life throughout Peru today.

Animals in Inca mythology

Like other Native American cultures, the Inca society was heavily influenced by the local animal populations, both as food, textile, and transportational sources as well as religious and cultural cornerstones. Many myths and legends of the Inca include or are solely about an animal or a mix of animals and their interactions with the gods, humans, and or natural surroundings.

Dogs

The Inca bred dogs for hunting and scavenging but rarely for religious purposes. The Huanca people, however, had a much more religious basis for their consumption of dog meat as in Inca mythology Paria Caca, their god, was pictured as feeding solely on dog after he defeated another god, Huallallo Carhuincho, in a skirmish. In some parts of South America the Huanca are referred to as “the dog-eating Huanca”. This behaviour of eating dog was looked down upon in other parts of the empire.^[17]

There also exists a city named Alqollacta, or “Dog town”, which contains statues of dogs and are thought to represent the souls of dogs that have died. The people would often save up bones and leave them at the statues so that it would give them a better standing in the afterlife.

Dogs were sometimes believed to be able of moving between life and death and also see the soul of the dead. In addition, the Inca believed that unhappy dead souls could visit people in the form of black dogs. The Aymara people of Bolivia were reported to believe that dogs were associated with death and incest. They believed that those who die must cross an ocean to the afterlife in the ear of, or on the nose of, a black dog. Additionally, some sources report that women who sleep alone at night were capable of being impregnated by ghosts which would yield a baby with dog feet.^[17]

Bears

Despite there only being one bear species in South America (the spectacled bear, *Tremarctus ornatus*), the story of The Bear's Wife and Children is a prominent story among the Inca.^[17] The Andean people believed that bears represented the sexual habits of men and women and the girls were warned of “bear-rape”. This story details a bear who disguises himself as a man who subdues a girl and takes her to his cave where he feeds her and takes care of her. Soon after, she bares two half bear half human children. With the help of the children the three are able to escape the cave and return to human society. The bear children are given to the town's priest who attempts to kill the cubs several times (by throwing them off buildings, sending them into the wild, sending them to fight officers) but is only capable of getting the younger bear-child killed.^[17] The older bear beats the trials and is sent to fight a damned soul, which he defeats and saves from damnation. The soul gives the bear his estate and wealth and the now fully grown bear man leaves human society as a white dove. This tale could be interpreted as a Native American's plight story against the Hispanic society in which they find them in, which becomes more believable as this folklore become more prominent after the Spanish Conquest.^[17]

In addition to this story, half bear half human beings called Ukuku are thought to be the only being that are able to bring ice from the top of mountains as they have the intelligence of men but the strength of bears. Ukuku clowns can be seen in the Corpus Christi celebrations of Cuzco where they undergo pilgrimage to a nearby glacier and spend the night on the ice as an initiation of manhood.^[18]

Foxes

The fox did not generally have a good reputation among the Inca or people of the Andes and was seen as an omen. Sacrifices to the gods included a variety of goods and animals, including humans, but were never seen to ever include foxes. Inca mythology contains references to gods being deceived by foxes. In one encounter, the deity Cuniraya Viracocha was angered by a fox and stated that “As for you, even when you skulk around keeping your distance, people will thoroughly despise you and say ‘That fox is a thief!’”. When they kill you they'll carelessly throw you away and your skin too”.^[19] In other narratives, the fox is said to have tried to steal the moon but the moon hugged the fox close which resulted in the spots on the moon. Finally, the fox still plays a role in current Andean society where the howling of a fox in the month of August is perceived as a sign of good luck.^[17]

The Inca had indigenous names for constellations as well as interstellar clouds (dark nebulae) visible from the Southern hemisphere. The fox (Atoq in quechua) is the name for one dark nebulae in the milky way, and Andean narratives, including Inca ones, may refer to the dark nebulae rather than the animal.

Pre-Inca Andean beliefs

Prior to the founding of the Inca Empire, there were several other cultures in various areas of Peru with their own beliefs, including cultures of the Chavín, Paracas, Moche, and Nazca. Additional pre-Inca beliefs can be found in the Huarocharí Manuscript, a 17th-century text that records the myths, culture, and beliefs

of people in the Huarochirí Province of the Western Andes.^[20]

See also

- Garcilaso de la Vega (chronicler)
- Guaman Poma
- Religion in the Inca Empire
- Huarochirí Manuscript

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